As the Army’s senior intelligence officer, she led the development and implementation of the U.S. Army’s multibillion dollar strategic plan increasing the Army intelligence, cyber, and security capabilities while supporting complex multidisciplinary operations across the globe—and the funniest person at [INSA], the funniest general at INSA.

So we’re going to continue our conversation on open source intelligence. To set the stage, earlier this year CIA Director John Brennan said, at an INSA event, that having the ability to leverage these open source environments and tools and bring together, you know, with clandestinely acquired information is just so enriching in terms of how we’re able to understand and create new knowledge.

And we just heard this last panel about all of the things that we’re able to do. This is really powerful and amazing technology. And I think you and I are going to talk about where we are with it. And so you were the G2 of the Army. Why is this topic so important? And can you share some of your perspectives on the journey? You really called it a journey, so I’d love to kind of unpack that a little.
And so when I became the Army G2 in 2012, and sat with our chief of staff and talked about the major things that we needed to do to make sure that we stayed ahead of the enemy, we had a long discussion about open source intelligence and getting out of the niche and getting out of the local, but bringing, really, an industrial age force together of all the different disciplines very comfortably using those, and not feeling afraid, not being confused, not—and understanding enough about the trade craft that, as [Mo] pointed out, to be able to distinguish the tweet that I’m sending to my husband that says I’ll be right home, honey, when actually I’m at the Pentagon mall, being able to sort that through.

And then putting the infrastructure in place that allows that ease of moving from an open source exploitation environment into highly classified systems that are going to confirm or deny, and then bringing that back down to produce at the unclassified level. All of what I just said takes a village, and it takes a plan.

And in about 2012, having piloted, probably for a decade in different [co-comms] with limited budgets and limited ideas, with just great pockets of people that were innovative, the Army decided we’re going to create OSINT at scale. And the first thing we have to do is make sure our analysts are comfortable with the idea that open source intelligence is something they need to value. And most of the younger generation gets it, but even the older generation understood it, the power of what could be gathered.

When you are an army that is deploying with 50 to 60 other countries that you may not have mature intelligence sharing agreements, sometimes that’s the only place you can do your work, at the unclassified, open source level. So just telling them the practical reasons that we needed to be involved in this, plus the vast amount of information that was available was the first step.

We needed to grapple with whether we were going to have a specialty or a new military occupational specialty of OSINT and OSINT only, or we were going to take all of our disciplines and make sure they understood their ability to go from highly classified into open source. And that’s kind of the direction that we’ve chosen to go.
Q: So where are we now? So let’s actually, so, you know, if OSINT were a film, were a movie, where are we in maybe our state of plan?

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Legere: So we’ve talked about this. OSINT is like the “Titanic,” the longest movie that has ever been made. In fact, I think its initial run is still running in the theater. Those of you who went with your spouses, my husband turned to me and said out loud, at the third hour, when is this boat gonna sink? [Laughter.] So I would say that if that’s the analogy, we are well into the romance. The orchestra is assembling on the deck. We all know we’re gonna hit the iceberg eventually. We still have a while to go.

And I think the things we’re focused on—and I talk about the Army, but understand there’s 17 agencies all moving in the same direction at various states of progress. So clearly the CIA, which has been the functional manager for open source for themselves, but now for all of us as our corporate lead, they are setting the conditions for expansion. Each of the services, in a time when there is no new start, there are no more people, there are no budgets, there is nothing but demand, we have to figure out a way to manage that evolution of a new skill set, the new infrastructure, the new training, the new tradecraft, the certification within existing budgets.

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And each of us are in a slightly different place. But the Army has created an OSINT office, has adjusted its curriculum, has ensured that new entrance into our intelligence disciplines get a...they’re the first beginning of OSINT training. And then we have a Ninja process where anyone in any operation, any unit that would like to use OSINT, should use OSINT, will get certified on the tradecraft that the open source center and CIA have approved.

I mentioned to her before, when you bring in a new discipline to an army whose average age is 21 or 22, you’ve got to be very conscious of making sure they understand the left and right limits of how open source intelligence still requires compliance with intelligence law, and we—

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Q: So that involves training, a lot of training

Legere: Right. We call it, you know, the incentive is to avoid the orange jumpsuit, is to ensure that the Army, yet again, does not set the precedent in our intelligence law, because we’re seeing the problem ahead of time, we’re identifying it, and we’re training our way away from it. And so we’re being very, very disciplined in terms of how we proceed.

General Ashley was the commanding general of the intelligence school. He is now the G2 of the Army. There’s tremendous continuity, and I think honestly, during his tenure, there will be so much progress. Also, at the same time, I want to put a plug in for the open source center, the open source enterprise. The CIA has been the center point for open source for the intelligence community since its inception. CIA has a, its open source center has a really big job of supporting a really important agency.

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They are now the functional lead for every agency on open source. And so it’s the difference between, I had mentioned, the DMV in a small town in [Vicksburg], where there’s about 1,500 people that want licenses to now they’re the DMV potentially for the city of Los Angeles, and everyone’s coming in at the same time saying scale up and attend to me, take care of our needs. And they’re really responding, to the best of their ability. And I think there’s a great collective amongst the intelligence community to work with them.

A couple of key points. One of the things to industry that we’d really like you to know is when we grow OSINT to Walmart size, we would like to do it as an enterprise. We would like to not have different standards in different agencies. We would like to pay attention to the center point. We would like them to broker data for us, and potentially NGA as a huge offshoot of that with commercial imagery.
You know, I watched, you know, the great 60 Minutes special about the problem that Watson was solving through the medical, the oncologists, where just the idea of bringing together 6,000 journals every day, because solutions were out there. If we proceed as an enterprise, the impact to the organization, it will be...it will accelerate.

If I have a concern, it's that we have had great sponsorship in Director Clapper, in Director Brennan. Director Brennan's got a really big job, but he's taking this on like his life depended on it. In the transition to the next set of great leaders, they need to stay focused on this. We as the 17 agencies have an obligation to support the center point and to behave as a functional group. To industry, understand the center point, and don't get frustrated with us when we say, for the unified platform, here's your point of contact. It's not the Army, it's not the Navy, it's not the Marine Corps, it's the open source center.

For data and analytics, we may need your help, but for the accumulation of data, we need it there. And then for all of us, and I think for Congress and for the American people, we need forums like this where we can discuss the implications of open source and how comfortable we are. I know the patron saint of open source, we were getting there, is Kim Kardashian, in the tendency to share. So I'll leave you with—

Q: She’s taught us all how to share.

Legere: She’s taught us all. We keep saying everyone should be a Kardashian of our adversaries. I just am very excited. At a time when [SIGINT] will go darker and other methods will get more difficult, this could be a great hedge to keep us safe and to keep us aware of the things that are happening here and around the world. And I thank everybody for your interest in this topic.

Q: Well, thank you so much for being here, and thank you all so much for, I think hopefully this was a great session. Thank you. [Applause.]